

## **INCENTIVES AND REWARDS FOR HIGHLY EFFECTIVE TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS**

### **Background and Context**

The single most important ingredient in a successful school system is an excellent teacher in every classroom. Teacher quality dwarfs every other school-based factor in its impact on student achievement. Indeed, research has demonstrated that having an excellent teacher versus a poor one can translate to more than a grade level difference in student progress annually. Moreover, these teacher effects are cumulative and long-lasting. A student with three good teachers in a row is positioned for long-term success; her peer who started at the same academic level is statistically unlikely ever to recover after three poor teachers. Given this reality, the city must do all it can to attract, develop, recognize, and retain excellent teachers in the District of Columbia.

This Administration also knows that to build and maintain the kind of school system we all desire requires highly effective principals at every school, leading the effort to improve outcomes for all students in the building. While the research on principal impact is less plentiful, there is evidence to support the common sense notion that principals matter. They are responsible more than anyone else for establishing the culture of a school – whether teachers feel supported and challenged to excel, whether students feel valued and expected to achieve, and whether parents feel welcomed as important members of the school community. While this document focuses mostly on teachers, the Mayor knows that attracting excellent principals, setting them up for success, and rewarding their efforts will bear valuable dividends in the form of improved student outcomes.

Teacher quality cannot be gauged by a single measure. Nor is teacher effectiveness immutable; it is affected by working conditions and professional development, among other factors. That said, the Mayor is committed to finding fair and meaningful ways to assess teacher performance and then using this information to reward and retain the most effective teachers, while leveraging their expertise to support the development of their colleagues.

### **Progress During the First 100 Days**

The development and implementation of any incentive program for teachers will require extensive collaboration among all relevant parties. In anticipation of these ongoing discussions, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Education has reviewed programs in place in other cities and states, initiatives directed by non-profit organizations, and innovations being implemented or planned by DCPS. What follows is an overview of existing programs reviewed by the Deputy Mayor's office. This is not an exhaustive list, nor is it a proposal for actions to be taken by the District of Columbia. It merely highlights possible directions in which the District of Columbia can go in its pursuit of improved educational outcomes for youth.

Incentive and reward programs for teachers take many forms, but tend to include some combination of the following elements: compensation for demonstrated impact on student outcomes, compensation for demonstrated use of effective teaching practice, compensation for advanced certification or other professional development, and expansion of career ladder options within teaching. Below are examples of programs that reflect these components; in many cases programs fall under more than one category.

#### *Compensation for Demonstrated Impact on Student Outcomes*

- State and local jurisdictions that include a student performance component in performance pay initiatives include Florida, Minnesota, Texas, Denver, and Houston<sup>1</sup>.
- The typical measurement is a standardized test, but other measures can be used. As a result, it can be challenging to include teachers in grade levels or subject areas where there are not standardized assessments. Douglas County, Colorado, for example, requires submission of a portfolio in order to qualify for merit bonuses.
- Typically, a “value-added” measurement is used, which assesses the teacher’s impact on student growth. This recognizes the reality of students coming into a teacher’s classroom at different starting places and rewards the teacher for the degree to which the student advanced while in her classroom.
- Performance-based compensation can be a competitive process where only a limited number of the top performers receive bonuses (Florida) or a collegial process where all teachers who qualify receive bonuses (Houston; TAP; Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles). Similarly, bonuses can be awarded to individual teachers or to the whole school, based on school-wide progress.
- Another possible model targets incentives at principals, rather than teachers. Increases in student achievement can earn principals individual bonuses and/or additional funding for their schools.
- Advanced Placement Strategies, a Texas program, provides bonuses to teachers for increasing the number of students passing AP exams.

#### *Compensation for Demonstrated Use of Effective Teaching Practice or Effective School Leadership Practice*

- While everyone agrees that student outcomes are the ultimate measurement of success, there is concern about relying solely on one measure of teacher effectiveness. Many performance pay systems, therefore, place an emphasis on

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<sup>1</sup> Examples provided are merely illustrative and are not a comprehensive list of jurisdictions implementing similar programs.

demonstrated effective teacher practice, as measured by observation against an evidence-based rubric.

- The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) utilizes specially-trained observers in conjunction with school principals, observing teachers three times throughout the school year. Classroom evaluation is also a component of performance pay in Florida's STAR program and Minnesota's Q-Comp program. In some cases, peer evaluation is used instead of or in addition to evaluation by a supervisor.
- DCPS and New Leaders for New Schools have partnered to win a federal Teacher Incentive Fund grant. Through the program they aim to identify effective teachers and compensate them for sharing their best practices.
- In the same way that teachers can be compensated for demonstrating research-based effective practice, principals can earn additional compensation for demonstrating effective leadership practice. Among the things for which principals might be recognized are parent engagement strategies, such as increasing the number of parents involved in PTA, back to school nights, parent teacher conferences, and school community events.

#### *Compensation for Advanced Certification or Other Professional Development*

- Many jurisdictions offer stipends or salary bonuses to teachers who achieve National Board certification. Maryland and Virginia provide annual bonuses to National Board certified teachers. The District of Columbia offers a one time bonus. There are currently 16 National Board Certified teachers in the District.
- The Fannie Mae Foundation has recently pledged \$10,000 grants to National Board certified teachers to help purchase homes in the District.
- Rather than providing compensation for any professional development a teacher chooses, some jurisdictions only incentivize those development opportunities that align with the priorities of the district and meet a specified bar for quality (Minnesota's Q-Comp; Douglas County, Colorado's "skills blocks"). Denver provides bonuses both for completion of university courses and for participation in principal-supervised projects.
- AP Strategies provides compensation to teachers for training in teaching AP courses.
- TAP provides specific training and certification to its master and mentor teachers.
- Through a partnership of the Darden Graduate School of Business Administration and the Curry School of Education, the University of Virginia has developed an executive education program to certify school administrators in educational turnaround management. School districts might opt to pay a premium for principals with this credential, which is earned based upon proven school outcomes as well as successful completion of the program. Similarly, the school district might fund principals with proven records of effectiveness to go through this program in order to build a local cadre of turnaround specialists.

### *Expansion of Career Ladder Options*

- DCPS is working in partnership with the New Teacher Center (NTC) to build an effective mentoring program for novice teachers. The NTC model requires that mentors are selected according to rigorous, evidence-based standards; trained in effective methods for supporting the development of new teachers; and fully released from their own classroom responsibilities so that they can spend significant time observing in new teachers' classrooms, demonstrating effective teaching practice, and providing focused feedback to their new colleagues. As of now that program has fallen well short of its goals, with roughly half of the mentor positions having been filled and mentor assignments being made several weeks into the school year.
- The Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) incorporates mentor teachers and master teachers who are selected for demonstrated effectiveness and provided with ongoing training. Master teachers and mentor teachers receive salary bonuses commensurate to the extra work that is required.
- Minnesota's Q-Comp program grants teachers salary bonuses and release time to take on school improvement-related leadership responsibilities.
- Douglas County, Colorado, offers bonuses to teachers for serving on district-wide and school committees.
- Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles provides stipends for teachers taking on leadership responsibility such as grade level or committee chairmanships, peer review, or mentor.

### *Miscellaneous Efforts*

- A common practice is to provide bonuses for teaching in high-need subjects or high-need neighborhoods (Texas; Denver).
- Some jurisdictions have created affordable housing specifically for teachers. Some of these developments are owned and sponsored by school districts; others were developed by private developers with the assistance of foundations and operate independently of the school district. Lower-cost housing adds to teacher satisfaction, reduces commuting time, and allows teachers to save money which they can then use to purchase homes and remain in the school system, rather than move (Baltimore, MD; Santa Clara, CA).
- Houston provides a bonus to teachers with perfect or near-perfect attendance. Vaughn Next Century Learning Center in Los Angeles also compensates teachers for unused sick days.

### **Ongoing Work**

Decisions on which new initiatives to pursue and which existing initiatives to bolster depend largely on whether the Mayor assumes authority and accountability for the school system. Until such a time as this change in governance is in effect, the office of the Deputy Mayor for Education will continue to analyze current and potential programs, reach out to local stakeholders, and lay the groundwork for future action. In

addition to continuing to build a strong working relationship with the Washington Teachers' Union, we will continue our conversation with leaders on this topic from across the country, including the New Teacher Center, the Teacher Advancement Program, the National Center on Performance Incentives, and the Broad Foundation.

More specifically administration staff has already begun to engage in discussions with key parties involved in current or planned teacher incentive and reward programs. There are two such programs that are already in the planning or implementation stages and that this administration sees as high priority: the new teacher mentoring program and the compensation incentive schools pilot called for in the current contract between the Washington Teachers' Union and DCPS. The Mayor will support and ensure the effective design and implementation of these programs, as appropriate.